

Together to #ENDviolence

Global Policy Briefing

Key Messages

Protect children from violence
in humanitarian settings

2030 Policy Objectives

Protect children from violence in humanitarian settings. Incorporate and adequately fund prevention and response to violence, exploitation and abuse of children in all humanitarian response plans.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Governments must recognise children's fundamental right to protection from violence– and their duty to uphold this right.
2. Governments and donors must more than double funding to meet the existing and escalating urgent and life-saving protection needs of children in humanitarian settings.
3. Communities and families must be supported in their front-line role in protecting children, made more essential by the pandemic.

KEY STATISTICS

- Before COVID-19, one in four children was living in a country affected by conflict or disaster.
- As of February 2021, across 35 humanitarian contexts:
 - 100% report populations are experiencing severe or extreme psychological distress
 - Two thirds see an increase in violence against children, including a 50% increase in child marriage risk
 - 80% report gender-based violence as severe or extreme, including a 50% increased risk to child marriage
- Yet, six months into the pandemic, child protection responses were more than 80% unfunded.

WHY AND WHY NOW?

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and accelerated shortcomings across all systems - local, national and global - that protect children from harm. It has directly and indirectly weakened the supports, conditions, and resources that help children, their families and communities, cope with major stressful events. For children living in humanitarian contexts, COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing risks, like child marriage or child labour caused by financial strain, and weakened the very systems and services that are relied on when compound demands stretch and erode community resilience. As a consequence, children are facing greater risks, experiencing more harm, and have even less support and care.

Loss of income due to confinement, sickness or death of a major breadwinner may push children out of school and into labour, child marriage, exploitation, or recruitment by armed groups. Girls, children of diverse gender and/or sexual orientation, children with disabilities, institutionalized or detained children, children on the streets or on the move, and those in refugee camps are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Children, particularly girls, face greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, domestic abuse and sexual exploitation.

HOW?

National governments and supporting humanitarian agencies must:

- Train and equip health, education and social service staff to effectively prevent and respond to child protection risks that arise during COVID-19 responses;
- Designate social service workforce as essential workers, and ensure and facilitate access to children and families;
- Mitigate the psychosocial and mental health impacts of COVID-19 measures on children and their caregivers with appropriate supports that consider their age, gender, and disability;
- Enact and enforce measures to minimise family separation resulting from COVID-19 containment measures or illness.

Humanitarian actors must:

- Work across sectors to address risk factors of harm that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated containment measures;
- Strengthen children's agency, ensuring meaningful participation of children in humanitarian responses;
- Ensure that the specific and unique needs children are at the core of all humanitarian activities.

We call on governments and donors to:

- Fund child protection appeals in full. At a minimum, fund Child Protection to the same level as the overall appeal;
- Require that all COVID-19 response plans and proposals adhere to the Child Protection Minimum Standards, and are costed and funded accordingly;
- Invest in local actors and community child protection mechanisms, the front-line of the COVID-19 pandemic, to support delivery of quality, standard-adhering child protection responses.

Support and Resources available

[The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: Protection of Children during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's Child Protection Minimum Standards](#)

[INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children](#)

[Still Unprotected: Humanitarian funding for Child Protection](#)

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